



October 1, 2010

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20350

General James T. Conway
Commandant of the Marine Corps
3000 Marine Corps Pentagon
Room 4E734
Washington, D.C. 20350

Dear Secretary Mabus and General Conway:

Thank you for considering Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point as a location for the F-35B variant of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). As you continue to work through the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process for a subsequent Record of Decision, we want to collectively provide our input regarding the stationing of F-35Bs at MCAS Cherry Point.

We request you consider the draft EIS Alternative 2, which would result in MCAS Cherry Point receiving 11 fighter squadrons. This approach would provide the Marine Corps with cost savings, economies of scale, and increased operational readiness. The air station has the existing infrastructure, facilities, range capabilities, and robust relationship with constituents across all counties of jurisdiction, to fully support the F-35B fighter squadron operational mission.

The Marine Corps would achieve economies of scale considering that the air station is the east coast home of the Marine Corps fleet of AV-8B harrier aircraft – the bridge capability for the F-35B – and is the home of the 2nd Marine Air Wing. Moreover, the air station's shared location with Fleet Readiness Center East (FRC-East) – the Department of the Navy's designated Vertical Lift Center of Excellence – would enhance Marine Corps operational readiness rates of the aircraft. FRC-East employees have the skill sets, technical proficiency, and experience to perform maintenance and repair work on vertical lift airframes.

Additionally, MCAS Cherry Point's close proximity to tactical training and electronic warfare ranges can fully support Marine Fighter Attack squadrons, while providing the Marine Corps with the means to deploy aviation assets in support of the Marine Air Ground Task Force

Commander. Lastly, the air station benefits from a tremendous host relationship with the City of Havelock and Craven County; the surrounding areas of Carteret, Jones, and Pamlico counties; and partnerships with local businesses, education and workforce assets.

If the Marine Corps proceeds with its preferred Alternative 1, we request you allocate the first 8 full fighter squadrons of the F-35B to MCAS Cherry Point, following the delivery of 3 training squadrons to MCAS Beaufort. We believe this decision would support timely and efficient drawdown of legacy aircraft, stationed at Cherry Point, bearing in mind that the AV-8B Harriers are under tremendous combat stress. It would also establish timely synergies with combat personnel at Camp Lejeune and the 2nd Marine Air Wing; and benefit from the existing capacity, infrastructure, and partnerships mentioned above.

North Carolina will continue its commitment to sustaining a robust Marine Corps presence in the State. We have worked to posture our State to be the best host of the F-35B at MCAS Cherry Point. Additionally, our State is working with Marine Corps Installations East to establish synergies in alternative energy, land-use planning, and aerospace; as well as fully support the Marine Corps Feed and Fuel the Force program.

Thank you for your consideration.



Bev Perdue

Richard Burr



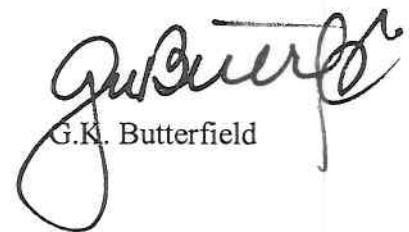
Kay Hagan



Walter Jones



Mike McIntyre



G.K. Butterfield

Enclosure: Justification to Recommendations

Copy to:

General James F. Amos
Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps
3000 Marine Corps Pentagon
Room 4E734
Washington, D.C. 20350

Justification to Recommendations:

- MCAS Cherry Point is one of the best all weather air stations in the world. During the Base Realignment and Closure Process, it achieved the 3rd highest Military Evaluation score for military airfields. The air station has 29,139 acres of training range land, and over 1,000 square nautical miles of special use airspace. It has 4 runways, capabilities for simultaneous take-off and landing, and 4 short take-off vertical landing (STOVL) landing pads.
- The air station is the east coast home to the Marine Corps fleet of AV-8B Harrier STOVL aircraft - this is significant as these airplanes are the bridge capability for the F-35B. It is the Marine Corps' major east coast aviation unit, providing aviation combat support for the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force, headquartered in Camp Lejeune. Additionally, the 2nd Marine Air Wing is headquartered at MCAS Cherry Point. MCAS Cherry Point also possesses a highly technical electronic warfare training capability that will support the F-35B.
- MCAS Cherry Point is also home to FRC – East, the Department of Defense's designated Vertical Lift Center of Excellence and the depot repair facility for the F-35B lift fan and airframe. FRC-East has set the standard for long-term sustainment, environmental excellence, and cost-effective maintenance and repair for all Navy and Marine Corps vertical lift aircraft. The facility employs a highly skilled workforce of over 3,500 personnel that has the skill sets, institutional memory, and technical proficiency in key areas necessary to perform maintenance and repair work on vertical lift airframes. Lockheed Martin, Pratt and Whitney, and other F-35B suppliers will utilize this workforce and create an increased readiness level for aircraft at stationed at MCAS Cherry Point.
- Through partnerships with local community colleges and state university campus, FRC-East has developed courses to create a pipeline of workers with critical skill sets. FRC-East also has a Rapid Response Team ready to be deployed within 24-72 hours in support of Marine Corps aviation operational repair needs worldwide. Having this capability at MCAS Cherry Point can significantly increase F-35B readiness, due to the need for unexpected repairs that are typically required of new aircraft.
- The MCAS Cherry Point proximity to training ranges can fully support individual and unit operational training for Marine Fighter Attack Squadrons. The airfield manages Bogue Field, an 875-acre Marine Corps Auxiliary Landing Field, which is the primary location for AV-8B Harrier practice landings and operations along the east coast. In accordance with the Marine Corps' expeditionary nature, this landing field provides the Marine Corps with the means to deploy its aviation assets in order to have a readily accessible aviation capability for the Marine Air Ground Task Force commander on the battlefield. Moreover, the Mid-Atlantic Tactical Training and Electronic Warfare Ranges are located within the Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune Operating Area - threat emitters are located at the Piney Island Bombing Target-11 complex and Outlying Field Atlantic. These threat emitters are capable of simulating surface-to-air missiles and communications jammers.
- State and Local: MCAS Cherry Point benefits from a strong host relationship with the City of Havelock and Craven County, which have been cited as an example of best practices for other military communities. It also benefits from partnerships with local community colleges and the State's University system. Due to Governor Perdue, there has been a robust state-level engagement regarding ways to institutionalize long-term land-use planning and energy partnership to support the strategic goals of the Navy and Marine Corps.